



Car Story (An EXHAUSTive Tale)

A Fable:

Once upon a time, in a land of abundant natural resources, there was a prosperous and hard-working populace. To maintain their prosperity, the people toiled daily from dawn to dusk, many of them traveling great distances to work in other lands. Even when they weren't working, they spent their time dashing to and fro, struggling to maintain their abodes and rear their offspring.

Now, also in this land of plenty lived an old wizard, both wise and cunning. The wizard saw the daily struggle of the populace, and they likewise cried out to him to bring them relief from their frantic lifestyle. And the wizard granted their request, saying, "I will give to you a magic carriage to ease your struggle. Large and fast, it will carry you from place to place more easily and conveniently than any other mode of transportation yet to be found. Yet beware, for this magic carriage has a price which will not become known to you for a time."

The populace were mystified and amazed, and they fell deeply in love with their magic carriages. To be sure, the carriages were large and

fast just as the wizard had promised, and they made both journeying to work and dashing to and fro much easier and more convenient. So popular were the magic carriages that soon they grew to dominate the landscape. They clogged the pathways and the travel routes throughout the land. They began to use up the land's once-plentiful natural resources. And, worst of all, they spewed venomous gases that the people had not noticed when the magic carriages were first given to them, but which increased greatly as the carriages grew in number. So the populace, desperate and choking, cried out once again to the wizard: "Save us from our own progress!" And the wizard answered, saying, "I told you so.

The magic carriages, though wonderful to behold, carry a heavy price. You must either suffer the terrible fumes or find a stronger magic to make them go away."

And lo, the people fought among themselves. The battle was terrible to behold, but at

last, when they could fight no more, they combined their wits and their ingenuity and created a stronger magic. And they called it "Emission Check," and it was pretty good.

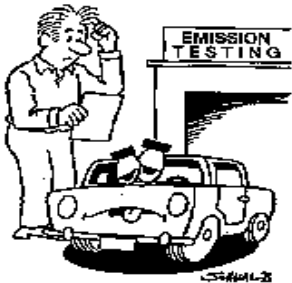
The Emission Check Program. No doubt you've heard of it, but you may not know exactly what it is unless you live in Spokane, Clark County, or the Puget Sound area. Unlike the fable, there is really nothing "magic" about it: it identifies the motor vehicles that cause the most air pollution and requires that they be repaired.

Those "magic carriages" cause more than half of Washington's



air pollution. An emission check measures carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons (partially burned gasoline) from gasoline vehicles and smoke levels from diesel vehicles. Vehicles that are 1968 or newer are tested every other year in urban areas of King, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, and Clark counties. The program is required by law in these areas because they have had problems with carbon monoxide and/or ground-level ozone air pollution due to motor vehicle use. There are 20 test stations in these five counties, and 1,052 certified repair shops around the state. A fee of \$12 cash is required at the time of an emission test.

Can we simplify your life?



The Emission Check Program has been working well; it tested about 1.2 million vehicles during 1997, and is credited with reducing air pollution in our state by about 146,400 tons each year. However, understanding the desire of the “populace” for ease and convenience, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) and local air quality agencies wanted to determine whether the program could be improved. So in 1997, Ecology began an evaluation of the Emission Check Program. The goal was to evaluate the program’s effectiveness and determine how it might be



Lifestyles

If you live in an area where emission checks are required, here are some tips for making the test go more smoothly. Even if you don’t live in an emission check area, some of these tips can help you keep your car running more cleanly and efficiently, and save you money.

- Maintain your vehicle properly throughout the year. Get regular tune-ups and keep your tires properly inflated.
- Don’t make emission repairs prior to having your car tested. If your car fails the test, you won’t get credit for repairs made before the emission check.
- Make sure your car is fully warmed up before the test. A 10-minute trip at freeway speed is usually sufficient.
- Have your car tested in the middle of the month. Lines tend to be shorter then.
- Keep the number of passengers in your car to a minimum. This cuts down on time spent getting in and out of the car during the test. And please leave pets at home – as a safety precaution, testing staff are not allowed to test your car if there is an animal in it.

And here are a couple of other timely tips:

- A reminder to those who use wood-burning stoves, inserts, or fireplaces: Now is the time to stack and dry your firewood to ensure dry, clean-burning wood for the winter heating season!
- If you’ve ever burned garbage in a burn barrel, take note: A new study by the Environmental Protection Agency shows that two garbage-burning barrels can put out as much dioxin and furan (toxic air pollutants) as a big solid waste incinerator with pollution controls.

changed to make things easier for vehicle owners, while still benefiting air quality.

In the first phase of the evaluation, Ecology staff carefully analyzed the existing Emission Check Program. They surveyed vehicle owners, the contractor that runs the test stations and performs the emission checks, repair shops and technicians, and the Department of Licensing. Then staff collected data on emission testing programs in other states to compare them to Washington’s program. Finally, possible changes to Washington’s program were investigated.

The surveys provided some of the most significant information to staff trying to determine how to make the program better. Common themes included the belief that new vehicles should not be tested, since they nearly always pass the test anyway due to their cleaner technology. Data gathered over the past several years, coupled with the experience gained with current test methods, supported the belief that newer vehicles may not need to be tested. Another frequent comment was that older vehicles should not be tested because they

are often collector cars or low-use vehicles.

In addition, the evaluation indicated that in the Puget Sound area, tightening the test standards could enable testing staff to more accurately identify the most polluting vehicles. It could also make it easier for repair technicians to determine the reasons for a test failure. The test currently used for most vehicles in the Puget Sound area is called a “loaded” test. It tests cars while idling and at cruising speeds of 22-35 miles per hour. This same test was recently changed in the Spokane and Clark County areas to replace the cruise mode with “Acceleration Simulation Mode,” or ASM testing. The ASM test can detect more polluting vehicles

than the loaded test. (The ASM test standards currently being used in Spokane and Clark County are start-up standards. These standards were designed to be tightened in the year 2000, after repair technicians have had time to gain experience in diagnosing needed repairs.)

A summary of the changes Ecology is proposing to make to the Emission Check Program as a result of these findings is shown in the table below.

When will these changes take place?

The Washington State Legislature included some of the proposed changes in legislation (House Bill 1354) passed during the 1997-98



A test station employee conducts an emission check.

legislative session. These include exempting vehicles from testing if they are less than five years old or more than 25 years old. An additional change made by the legislature is to reduce the maximum allowable test fee from \$18 to \$15 (there are no plans at this time to raise the current fee of \$12). This legislation won’t take effect until the year 2000, so those changes will not be made until then.

Before implementing any of the other changes, Ecology wants public input. The agency conducted focus group sessions during July 1998, in which citizens and representatives of health organizations, environmental groups, automobile associations, auto repair technicians, and the business community discussed and gave feedback on the proposed changes. In addition, public meetings are scheduled to begin in August to get more feedback. If you would like to comment on the changes, please contact [Veronica Tracy](#) of the Department of Ecology’s Air Quality Program, (360) 407-6882; or email VTRA461@ecy.wa.gov.

The Program Now	The Proposed Change	The Reason
All vehicles 1968 and newer are tested, except those with a model-year the same as or greater than the calendar year.	Test only vehicles 5 years old or older.	New, cleaner technology has resulted in a very low failure rate among newer vehicles.
Vehicles as old as 1968 are tested.	Exempt vehicles older than 25 years.	Little emission reduction is being achieved by testing this group of vehicles. Many are not routinely driven, and if licensed as collector cars, are already exempt from emission testing.
Vehicles sold by dealers are exempt from the test requirement.	Drop the exemption for vehicles sold by dealers, and require that they be tested.	Offsets increases in air pollution resulting from exemption of newer and older vehicles.
Drivers pay for the test in cash at the time of the test.	Pay for testing at the time of licensing the vehicle.	More convenient for vehicle owners, and enables payment by means other than cash.
ASM test standards are “start-up” standards.	Tighten testing standards for ASM.	A more accurate and realistic standard can now be set due to experience gained with the current test.
A loaded test is used in the Puget Sound area, and ASM testing is used in Spokane and Vancouver.	Change to a better test (ASM) in the Puget Sound area, if cost allows.	ASM testing better and more accurately identifies polluting vehicles.

Ecology will report to the legislature on the Emission Check Program evaluation results and recommendations by January 1, 1999.

Update

Monitoring ozone and visibility:

An air quality exhibit is being installed and the air monitoring station is being relocated at Mount Rainier this summer. The station will now monitor for ozone air pollution and visibility at the Jackson Visitor Center at Paradise. The exhibit describes the effects of air pollution on the park, and identifies sources of and solutions to the problem. Contact: [Ann Butler](#), (360) 407-6334.

Including the revised New Source Review regulation in the SIP: A public hearing on incorporating Ecology's revised New Source Review regulation into the State Implementation Plan (SIP) is scheduled for Friday, August 21, 2:00 p.m. at Ecology's Headquarters Building in Lacey, Washington. The regulation, Ecology's principal rule for reviewing new industrial sources of air pollution, was adopted in January 1998. Ecology is now proposing to include it in the SIP, a statewide plan for meeting and maintaining federal air quality standards. Contact: [Tom Todd](#), (360) 407-7528.

Air Lines is published quarterly and offers updated information on the Clean Air Washington Act and other Air Quality Program activities. *Air Lines* welcomes your comments. Questions and contributions should be directed to:

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